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Statement submitted by Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Statement by Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia on the priority theme for the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.

Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia considers the role and contribution of rural women, including indigenous women, in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty to be critical.

Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia requests Member States, in collaboration with the organizations of the United Nations and the rest of civil society, to continue their efforts to implement the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits and to attach greater importance to the improvement of the situation of rural women in their national, regional and global development strategies by, inter alia:

- Pursuing the socioeconomic empowerment of rural women and supporting their full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels;
- Creating an enabling environment for improving the situation of rural women and ensuring systematic attention to their needs, priorities and contributions;
- Promoting consultation with and the participation of rural women, including indigenous women and women with disabilities;
- Ensuring that the perspectives of rural women are taken into account and that they participate in the design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of policies and activities related to emergencies;
- Integrating a gender perspective into the design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of agricultural development policies and programmes;
- Addressing the specific health needs of rural women and taking concrete measures to enhance and provide access to the highest attainable standards of health for women in rural areas;
- Investing in and strengthening efforts to meet the basic needs of rural women through improved availability of, access to and use of critical rural infrastructure;
- Designing and implementing national policies that promote and protect the enjoyment by rural women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and creating an environment that does not tolerate violations of their rights;
- Developing specific assistance programmes and advisory services to promote the economic skills of rural women;
- Ensuring that the rights of older women in rural areas are taken into account with regard to equal access to services and resources;
- Mobilizing resources, including at the national level and through official development assistance, for increasing women's access to existing savings and credit schemes;
- Integrating increased employment opportunities for rural women into all international and national development strategies and poverty eradication strategies;

- Taking steps to ensure that women's unpaid work and their contributions to on-farm and off-farm production are recognized;
- Promoting programmes to enable rural women and men to reconcile their work and family responsibilities and to encourage men to share household and childcare responsibilities equally with women;
- Considering the adoption, where appropriate, of national legislation to protect the knowledge, innovations and practices of women in indigenous and local communities relating to traditional medicines, biodiversity and indigenous technologies;
- Addressing the lack of timely, reliable data disaggregated by sex, including by intensifying efforts to include women's unpaid work in official statistics;
- Designing and revising laws to ensure that, where private ownership of land and other property exists, rural women are accorded full and equal rights in this regard;
- Supporting a gender-sensitive education system that considers the specific needs of rural women in order to eliminate gender stereotypes and discriminatory tendencies affecting them.

Rural women account for more than one third of the world's population and the majority of the 43 per cent of the global agricultural labour force who are women. They till the land and plant the seeds that feed entire nations. They ensure food security for their communities and build climate resilience. But when it comes to owning land and accessing agricultural investments and technologies for climate resilience, they are left far behind men, owing to challenges in obtaining financing, excessive bureaucracy, a lack of public transport communication infrastructure and a lack of Internet connectivity where they live, among other issues. We therefore call for measures to minimize such obstacles, given that female entrepreneurship is necessary for the future of rural areas and for women to have the autonomy to make decisions that affect their lives.

Climate change and climate disasters exacerbate existing gender inequalities and discrimination that constrain rural women's decision-making power and participation in their households and their communities. For instance, as floods and droughts increase, rural women and girls spend more time and effort collecting and securing water and fuel, thereby missing out on education and income-generating opportunities.

Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia supports efforts to increase women farmers' access to land, financing, climate information and climate-smart technologies to achieve gender equality through climate-resilient agriculture and capacity-building to develop green agricultural value chains. Training equips them with skills to pursue new livelihoods and adapt technology to their needs.

Communication technologies act as a bridge between rural and urban areas and contribute to the eradication of continuing social and labour inequalities, given that the Internet enables access to training in all spheres and fosters entrepreneurship, as it favours economic diversification by facilitating product marketing and serving as a showcase for rural businesses.

In Guatemala, Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia leads cooperation projects directed by women. This requires the involvement and buy-in of the entire community, since in Guatemala, it is traditionally men who participate and take the

lead in the main development spheres and processes, which prevents women from being part of transformative change in agricultural development and from gaining access to productive resources and assets such as land, services, education and social protection. Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia promotes good governance, democratic values, citizenship and equality between men and women, advocates increasing the productive potential of rural women and is working to develop a programme on the economic empowerment of rural women, in collaboration with municipal authorities through municipal women's offices and with the support of the agencies of the United Nations.

Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia notes that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has reaffirmed the universal consensus on the vital importance of gender equality and its contribution to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Recognition of the global importance of the work of rural women, of their social and economic rights and of the need for them to have access to financing and technological tools, and the adoption of measures to recognize the unpaid work of rural women, are indispensable to the achievement of the new, transformative agenda for sustainable development, which is aimed at reducing poverty (Goal 1) and inequality (Goal 10), achieving gender equality (Goal 5), promoting climate action (Goal 13), making cities and communities sustainable (Goal 11) and promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (Goal 8).